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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 CHENGDU 000171

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR EAP/CM, DS/IP/ITA, DS/IP/EAP

E.O. 12958: DECL: 8/1/2033

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [PHUM](#) [ASEC](#) [CH](#)

SUBJECT: KUNMING BOMBINGS: SOME LOCAL PERSPECTIVES

REF: A. BEIJING 2946

[1](#)B. 07 CHENGDU 267

[1](#)C. 07 CHENGDU 100

CHENGDU 00000171 001.2 OF 003

CLASSIFIED BY: James A. Boughner, Consul General, U.S. Consulate General, Chengdu.

REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Following the July 21 bombing of two buses in Southwest China's Yunnan provincial capital of Kunming, security forces remain on alert with a noticeable stepped up presence in some downtown areas. Speculation in the city appears still focused, although not exclusively, on alleged ethnic Uighur involvement. With rumors of possible other bombings, as well as two recent false alarms, local nerves are somewhat on edge. End Summary.

Atmospherics  
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[1](#)2. (SBU) During a July 29-30 visit to Kunming, CG discussed with official and other contacts the local security situation. Post confirmed on July 21 with the Yunnan Public Security Bureau that two separate explosions involving buses traveling west (Route 54) along one of Kunming's principal roads had occurred during that morning's rush hour killing two and injuring 14 people. Chinese authorities dismissed a subsequent claim of responsibility by the ethnic Uighur "Turkestan Islamic Party" (TIP). Up to two other bus bombings were "rumored" to have also occurred in Kunming that day.

[1](#)3. (SBU) The British "Guardian" newspaper later reported a bus explosion might have occurred on July 28 in Kunming, although local officials denied it. During CG's stay in Kunming he was told by an eyewitness that the incident referred to by the "Guardian" was in fact a bus tire blowing out. The eyewitness said he and everyone else in the immediate area initially thought there had been another bombing when they heard a loud boom and saw black smoke rising from one of the front tires of the bus.

[1](#)4. (SBU) Not surprisingly, security appeared tighter than usual at the Kunming airport upon CG's arrival late the afternoon of July 29. Additional baggage search/metal detector procedures were in place for passengers and only those holding tickets were allowed within the airport terminal. CG's local driver said all vehicles parked at the airport had to first go through a security inspection, including engine checks. The driver added that motorcycle security patrols were stepped up in several areas of the city. CG saw a motorcycle patrol of eight

uniformed "special police" (Te Jing) wearing flak vests and combat helmets near Kunming's Green Lake district, popular with tourists and close to where the bus bombings occurred.

15. (SBU) During the evening of July 29, a downtown area of Kunming was closed off when bomb disposal personnel (with remote-controlled robot) were called in to deal with a suspicious looking brief case that was left unattended in a public area. According to local officials, the brief case turned out to be just a brief case. One contact described how, when he was on a Route 54 bus on July 30, security officials both riding the bus and stationed at bus stops inspected all passengers who tried to board with packages. Route 54 buses have recently had very few passengers.

#### Government Contacts

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16. (C) On July 30, Yunnan FAO Director Zhou Hong (protect) told CG there were not yet any specific leads on the July 21 bombings. She remarked that "all scenarios" were being considered. Referring to possible alleged involvement by ethnic Uighurs from Xinjiang in Northwest China, Zhou remarked that, if "Eastern Turkestan" (Dong Tu) forces had been involved, she doubted Kunming's local Hui (ethnic Han Muslims) residents would try to shield them. (Note: Islam in what is now Yunnan Province dates back to at least the 13th century; one estimate puts Kunming's current Hui population at around 500,000. End note). Zhou added that, although Yunnan does not have any indigenous Uighurs, some Uighurs live in the province "illegally." A reward of RMB 300,000 (about USD 44,000) is being offered to anyone who can provide information that leads to the arrest of those responsible for the bombings. Local security officials are currently trying to track the origin of the components used in the bombs.

17. (C) Yunnan Information Office Director Deng Meiying (protect)

CHENGDU 00000171 002.2 OF 003

commented to CG that what worries government authorities most about the bombings is that they appear to indicate a degree of coordination and planning that can not be explained as just the action of one angry individual. On the other hand, the explosive devices used were "crude and unsophisticated," not the work of a "well-financed organization." She asserted, "Uighurs are of course dangerous," but there have not been any significant security incidents involving Hui in Yunnan "since the 1980's." (Note: refs b and c discuss continued sensitivities about the killing of approximately 900 Hui by People's Liberation Army (PLA) troops during a confrontation in 1975 in the village of Shadian about 250 kilometers southeast of Kunming. Shadian is currently the center of a very active madrassa that attracts students from throughout western China. What will be China's largest mosque is currently being constructed there. End note.)

#### Malaysian Consul General

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18. (C) Malaysia's Kunming-based Consul General (protect) told CG his local security contacts stressed to him "Eastern Turkestan" forces could not have been behind the July 21 bombings. When he asked them why not, they replied "because we already rounded up all Uighurs (and Tibetans) in Kunming during the last several months in preparation for the Olympics and sent them back to their home villages;" and, "we did not pick up any suspicious discussions between Uighurs during our monitoring of local cell phone conversations." The Malaysian Consul General said his security contacts really did not appear to know who was responsible for the bombings. He has not come across any evidence to support rumors that there were four -- not two -- bus bombings in Kunming on July 21.

19. (C) While he doubts local Hui would support Uighurs to "cause trouble," the Malaysian CG also volunteered he has been tasked by his government to try to keep an eye on possible

foreign-supported radicalization of young Hui in Shadian. Hui leaders in Shadian are quite wealthy due to their control of mining and manufacturing interests in the area, but it is possible that recent expansion of mosques and madrassas in Shadian has also been facilitated with overseas support. (Note: per ref b, the head of a new madrassa near Shadian told us in late 2007 that his school had Saudi instructors. A senior instructor at Shadian's main madrassa studied for a number of years in both Saudi Arabia and Pakistan. End note).

¶10. (C) According to the Malaysian Consul General, one theory currently being investigated by government authorities is that the bombings could be linked to a violent confrontation that took place just two days earlier on July 19 between ethnic Dai and local security officers in Menglian (southern Yunnan near the Burma border). The confrontation allegedly involved a dispute at a rubber plantation that left at least two Dai dead and 15 injured, as well as 41 police injured and eight police vehicles smashed. The Malaysian Consul General speculated the dispute could have been due to illegal land grabs by Han-controlled firms. Menglian is also a major transiting area for drugs smuggled in from Burma.

Two Businessmen  
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¶11. (C) One local business contact (ethnic Han; former PLA) told CG "most people" in Kunming blame Uighurs for the bus bombings, noting with irony that "when the Uighurs don't do anything, the government blames them for something; when they claim to have done something, the government says they didn't." According to the contact, Yunnan attracts many Uighurs because they can find work from wealthy Hui businessmen and the overall political and security environment is far less strict than in Xinjiang. (Note: see ref c for a discussion CG had in early 2007 with a Saudi-trained Uighur instructor at the Najiaying mosque south of Kunming in which he made similar points about the advantages of living in Yunnan. End note). The contact asserted that even before the bombings, "Chinese" in Kunming were wary of interacting with "Muslims." He pointed to a passing van driven by a Hui that had Koranic verses in Arabic stenciled on the back window and noted, "you don't want to get into a traffic accident with `those people.'"

¶12. (C) A longtime foreign businessman resident in Kunming told CG most of his local staff believe Uighurs were behind the July 21 bombings and that government officials may be trying to cover up that there were other bombings as well. He said that rumors of possible further incidents during the Olympic period are rampant and some of his local staff are avoiding crowded downtown areas.

CHENGDU 00000171 003.2 OF 003

Comments  
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¶13. (C) Whoever turns out to have been responsible for the July 21 bus bombings, there appears little question that Yunnan authorities are taking seriously the possibility of other incidents and putting into place added security measures. One example? According to the general manager of a restaurant where CG hosted a lunch on July 30 for Kunming-based Consuls Generals (Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, Malaysia), security officers closely searched the premises ahead of time and stationed plainclothes personnel inside and in front of the restaurant during the event.  
BOUGHNER